

A Workshop Wish List

Compare your Christmas list with your fellow woodworkers.

By Steve Shanesy with *Popular Woodworking* Readers

If you have any reason to hope for more than a lump of coal come Christmas morning, read on! Here's your chance to compare your wish list of shop tools and equipment with the dreams of your fellow readers. Here's what we learned when we recently asked, "What do you want for Christmas this year?"

Better still, go ahead and complete our survey (find it in the PullOut™ Plans) before reading on, then compare your picks to our winners. Regardless, do complete the list, hand it to some friends or loved ones and see if they get the hint. Think big! Who knows, you might get lucky, especially if you've been good about putting your tools away and sweeping up the shop at the end of the day.

How We Did It

We came up with a list of readers to survey by randomly selecting 500 names from the list of about 225,000 subscribers. We then compiled a list of tools and equipment in seven price categories starting with \$25 or less and ending with \$300 to \$500 (yes, \$500, this is a wish list). When completing the survey, respondents could check as many items in a category as they wanted, and were encouraged to write in items not listed. In all, we received more than 150 survey responses with a total of 2,096 items checked. Lastly, unlike surveys you hear about on the evening news, I can't tell you what the scientific margin of error is and don't care. We did this for fun!

You should also know that we came up with the tool list by combining the pages of numerous mail-order woodworking equipment and supply catalogs like Woodcraft, Trendlines, McFeely's, Constantines, Woodworker's Supply and Leichtung Workshops. We didn't attempt a complete list but merely wanted a sampling of items we thought would be of interest to you.

And the Really Big Winners Are . . .

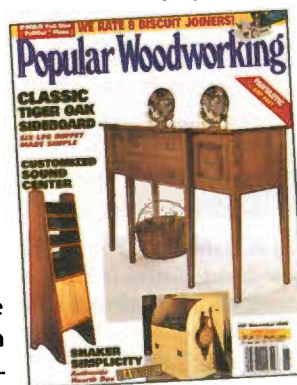
Before we open the envelope, if you will, let me say that I'll risk all future credibility by announcing the top vote getters of all categories combined. (Let me assure you, though, that I'm a truthful servant/editor dedicated to the preservation of honest reporting.) First, there was a tie for this coveted title so the honors are shared by (drum roll, please) a dust collection system *and* a subscription to *Popular Woodworking*! (Ah, loyal readers, I've never doubted for a moment that you're the best woodworking magazine readers in the world.) Both the dust collection system (\$200-\$300 category) and subscription (under \$25) received twice as many votes as any other item listed. The next most popular items on our wish list proved to be a boxed router template guide set and a pneumatic finish nailer kit.

Category Winners

\$25 or Less

As mentioned, readers chose a subscription to *Popular Woodworking* as the winner of this category, which, when you think about it, is a terrific value. With a subscription cost of less than \$3.00 per issue, and with a minimum of four to five project plans in each issue, your maximum cost per plan is in the 60 - 75 cent range. And with that, you're getting all the tips, techniques, tricks, and tool and book reviews for free! With 74 readers out of about 150 total responses, the *Pop Wood* subscription was by far the most often selected of any listing in any category. (Knowing this, we slipped in a few extra of those damed subscription cards so you could pass them on to your friends and family. Just kidding!)

Runners-up in this category included a square corner chisel (always handy for squaring up mortise corners) with 12 percent of this group; a bar clamp (because you can never have enough clamps) with 11 percent; and a five-piece set of brad point spur drill bits with 7 percent.



Popular Woodworker,





\$25 To \$50 Group

It's not surprising that router tooling and accessories showed up as popular items given the near universal acceptance and application of this important machine. Top vote-getter in this group was a selection of various sized collars making up a set of **router template guides**, which grabbed 21 percent of the votes cast in this price range. Scoring second was an electric detail carver that captured 16 percent of the votes. A finish spray gun finished next with 14 percent of the selections marked in this category.

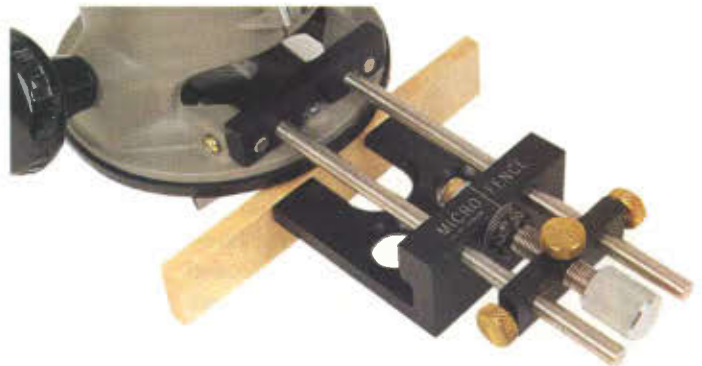
\$51 To \$100 Category

Again, a router accessory dominated this category, although this winner has a specific, dedicated use. A **dovetail jig** drew a clear preference with 15 percent of all votes in this price range. A detail sander came close behind in the vote getting with 12 percent. It should be a hot item this holiday season as new models and increased popularity come together at the tool counters of your local discount tool stores.

Woodworkers also expressed a strong desire for carbide tipped saw blades, pulling 11 percent of our respondents' votes. Respectable numbers were also generated by a carving chisel set and a moisture meter, which tied at 8 percent.

\$101 To \$150 Group

The field in this price range was tightly packed with only three percentage points between the first four candidates. And as mentioned earlier, a router accessory walked with the honors. In this case, a **precision router fence** garnered just one more vote than an oscillating belt sander with 15 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Very close behind were a reciprocating saw (13 percent) and 16" scroll saw (12 percent).



The \$151 To \$200 Category

Like the previous category, tool preference in this price range was close among the top four items. The only spread was between first and second with a **pneumatic finish nailer** gathering 17 percent of responses while a 13-piece router bit set pulled 15 percent. And once again, router accessories (in this case tooling) fared well. Close behind was a tie with 14 percent each, between a small lathe and a carbide tipped, anti-kickback dado set.

Joseph W. Hasken, Sarasota, Florida



"I don't wait until Christmas or birthdays to add to my tools. I get them when I need them," wrote Joe Hasken when responding to our survey. And from the project photos he sent along, it looks like he knows how to use them. The jeeps were table favors for his 14th Armored Div. reunion.

Light Heavy Weights:

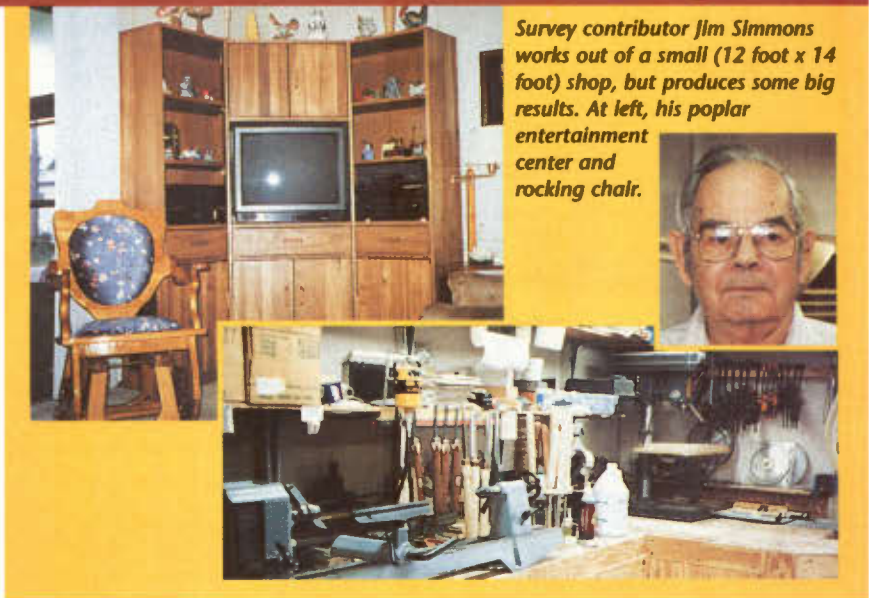
\$201 To \$300

Numerous equipment items began to appear in this price range. At this level, I thought readers would select items that would help round-out or upgrade existing shop equipment, providing them with greater capability. They clearly had another priority in mind. While I expected an interest in dust collection, I was surprised by how great a preference was expressed for a dust collector that would offer multiple machine hook-ups, enough air velocity and CFM (cubic feet of air per minute) to get the job done. Indeed, a **dust collection system** received 19 percent of the votes in this grouping,



seven points more than the next vote getter.

The rest of the category was tightly bunched together, so much that ties were registered for both second and third places. True to form and as witnessed in other categories, a heavy duty plunge router came in second, tied with a high volume, low pressure (HVLP) spray system. Both held 12 percent of the category. Couple the HVLP rig with the spray gun preference in the \$50 group and I see a growing interest in spray finishes among readers, an encouraging trend. Tied in third position, all with 11 percent, were a 14" band saw, a bench top hollow chisel mortiser (which we'll be reviewing next issue) and an air compressor.



Survey contributor Jim Simmons works out of a small (12 foot x 14 foot) shop, but produces some big results. At left, his poplar entertainment center and rocking chair.



And the Heavyweights:

\$301 To \$500

Preferences in this group were very evenly spread. The top candidate in this most expensive price range was a **12" planer** with 16 percent of the vote. Does this relate to the popular dust collection system in the previous price range? I think so. Interest in a planer isn't really surprising, since having one provides so many more woodworking options, especially when coupled with a jointer. A high quality, oscillating spindle sander came in at 15 percent. A compound miter saw and a 1.5 HP shaper equipped with a 3/4" spindle both won 13 percent of the votes.

The "Other" Question

We also offered our readers an "other" section. Items worth noting here because of the frequency with which they turned up include a workbench, various sharpening systems, sets of Forstner bits, and panel-door, stile and rail router bit sets.

And Finally, the Priceless Category

Reader John Schickler of Midlothian, Virginia, enclosed a nice letter along with his survey. He explained that both he and his father subscribe and enjoy discussing various articles and projects from the magazine. He goes on to say, "Woodworking is one of my favorite activities." It must be, for John was the only reader to create an entire category when completing his survey. He titled the price range "Priceless" and had only one item entered, "More time for woodworking!"

Perhaps we should all put this one at the top of our lists!

Steve Shaney is editor of Popular Woodworking, and the 150 survey respondents are a great group of woodworkers.

And the Winning Reader Is...

Doug Green of Boulder, Colorado. As a thank-you to survey respondents, we randomly selected a participant's name to win \$250 worth of books from The Woodworker's Book Club. Doug, a full-time cabinetmaker, came up the lucky winner! He was taught woodworking by his father starting at age five, worked as a computer programmer after high school but returned to his life-long hobby at age 40. "I guess life does begin at 40, 'cause I'm sure having fun," he says.